

Recordings in Review

Sutherland, Soprano

DONIZETTI: "Ancor non giunse!" "Regnava nel silenzio," "Ardon gl'incensi" ("Lucia"), "Ah! tardai troppo" ("Linda di Chamounix"); VERDI: "Ernani! involami" ("Ernani") and "Mercè, diletti amiche" ("Vespri Siciliani"). Joan Sutherland, soprano, with Paris Conservatoire Orchestra conducted by Nello Santi. London OS 25111, \$5.98. HANDEL: "Tornami a vagheggiar" and "Ombre pallide" ("Alcina"). Joan Sutherland, with Philomusica of London conducted by Anthony Lewis. "Tune your harps" ("Esther"). William Herbert, tenor. "Turn not, O Queen." ("Esther"). Hervey Alan, bass. "Jephtha" Sinfonia (Act III), Symphony (Act II), "Rodrigo" suite. All conducted by Lewis. L'Oiseau-Lyre SOL 60001, \$5.98.

HAD THE FIRST VANCOUVER FESTIVAL in the summer of 1958 not provided a "Don Giovanni" with Joan Sutherland as Donna Anna (reported in SR, August 9, 1958), it might be an inclination to accept her singing of Donizetti and Verdi as the work of another light-voiced soprano with little dramatic reserve. But its effortless suavity, added



Joan Sutherland—"another all-purpose soprano in the making"

to the "poise and musicality" admired in Miss Sutherland's Donna Anna (her very first, it was later discovered), suggests that she may be another all-purpose soprano in the making.

What of the quality, and the inevitable comparisons with Callas? The quality is clear, even, and as applied to the requirements of "Lucia," remarkably relaxed. It tends more to the kind of coloratura quality associated with Galli-Curci and Pons at their best than to the disembodied, covered effect favored by Callas. And if she is somewhat more conscious of dramatic emphasis than the average Lucia, she doesn't approach the kind of characterization to which Callas aspires. What is remarkable, perhaps, is the substance of the lower range where, now and again, there is a vestige of the veiled timbre à la Callas. Sutherland floats beautifully through "Ernani, involami," and the convolutions of the "Bolero" from "Vespri Siciliani" are no problem at all.

As she shows in her singing of Handel—two airs whose existence the average soprano would like to forget—Miss Sutherland is a musician of rare refinement and artistic aspiration, as well as the mistress of a vocal technic more varied and encompassing than any of her contemporaries. How it would sound in a big theatre is another matter; but this pair of records is sufficient unto themselves. The contents of the Handel disc, otherwise, are more interesting for the material than for the manner of the performance.

More of Galli-Curci

DONIZETTI: "Verranno a te sull'aure,"* "Il dolce suono" ("Lucia"), "O luce di quest' anima" ("Linda di Chamounix"), "Quel guardo il cavaliere," "Tornami a dir che m'ami" ("Don Pasquale"); BELLINI: "Come per me sereno," "Sovra il sen la man mi posa," "Son geloso del zeffiro,"* "Ah! non credea mirarti" ("La Sonnambula"), "Son vergin vezzosa," "Qui la voce sua soave" ("Puritani"). Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano. Those marked * with Tito Schipa, tenor. Camden CAL 525, \$1.98.

THE COINCIDENTAL APPEARANCE of this second disc bearing the title "The Art of Galli-Curci, Vol. 2" provides an illuminating check to the statements about Sutherland in the preceding paragraphs, for those who may never have

heard the famous coloratura in this repertory from another source. Insofar as one can make comparisons derived from recording techniques some forty years apart, Miss Sutherland's sound indeed has some of the airiness, limpidity, and sweetness of Galli-Curci's. This still leaves ample areas of individuality for the older singer—grace, lightness, suppleness in ornament—which still surpass anything heard since her time.

For the most part, this is the most absorbing collection of Galli-Curci that has ever come to attention: an infinitely more flattering tribute to her art than the oft-heard "Lo! here the gentle lark" and "Shadow Song" which have been issued and reissued. There is virtually none of the sharp sound associated with her later career (except, perhaps, in the "Linda di Chamounix" excerpt) and a reasonable variation of timbre to ward off the monotony that sometimes creeps into an extended sampling of her work. And amid all the brilliants are such extra dazzling gems as the D flat at the end of "Ah! non credea mirarti" (less sung than exhaled) and the shakes in the "Mad Scene" which remain the last real trills sung by such a vocalist.

For the Desert Island

MOZART: *Trio in E flat (K.498)*. *Members of the Vienna Octet, with Walter Panhoffer, piano. Quintet in E flat (K.498). The same.* London CS 6109, \$4.98.

THERE ARE, apparently, fewer desert islands than there used to be, hence a decline in the popular pastime of naming books and records (not to mention less inanimate things) with which to be stranded on same. But if I could find one equipped with AC current, turntable, dual amplifier, and two speakers, I'd give this specimen of Mozart's art high priority upon removal there.

For one thing, though they are written for instruments, the two works are beautifully illustrative of his finest vocal style. Included in the three movements of the trio are an opening slow movement in sonata form, a minuet and trio, and a finale-with-variations. For its part, the quintet is almost a summary of two styles of writing—chamber and concertante—with each movement an exemplary instance of its type. Moreover, there isn't a bar in the two works which isn't musical, and indispensable.

It may be assumed, as a precondition to the "faint praise" inscribed above, that the performance is worthy of the material. I direct particular attention

to the trio, in which Willi Boskovsky operates on the viola, and performs with the skills which have made him a notable concert-master for the Vienna Philharmonic. As for the instrument on which he performs, it sounds as though it might be rubbed regularly with whipped cream, or, at least, sprinkled every now and then with *kirsch*. The stereo locates the ensemble directly between the two speakers, a position about which there can be no complaints.

Piatigorsky with Foss

DEBUSSY: *Sonata No. 1*; STRAVINSKY: "*Suite Italienne*"; BUSONI: "*Kleine Suite*," Op. 23; Foss: *Capriccio*. Gregor Piatigorsky, cello, with Lukas Foss, piano. RCA Victor LM 2293, \$4.98.

THOUGH the Debussy sonata (of 1915) is given subordinate billing here to the Stravinsky suite, it is by far the principal reason for recommending the disc. Thanks in no small measure to the flexible, always well-shaded pianistic performance of Foss, the distinctions of the music are more strongly projected than is commonly the case. In his annotation Piatigorsky dates his first knowledge of the Sonata to 1918, when he introduced it to Moscow. This is one instance in which an acquaintance of four decades has tended to reveal, rather than obscure, the essence of a work to its performer. In beauty of sound and strength of statement, this belongs among the best of recent Piatigorsky performances.

The Stravinsky, however, is decidedly less attractive—a comment in part on its less than real suitability for the cello (it was derived from the "*Pulcinella*" suite by way of the violin suite made by the composer). Moreover it impels Piatigorsky to some rough and raspy sound, also a more than tolerable amount of off-pitch fingering. On the other hand there is nothing but virtue in the Busoni and Foss, the latter a much more substantial work than its title would suggest, a real addition to the literature of the solo instrument. It is hardly necessary to add that Foss and Piatigorsky are as partial to Foss as Piatigorsky and Foss are to Debussy.

Yesterday's Wagner

WAGNER: "*Ho-jo-to-ho*," "*War es so schmähhlich?*" "*Leb' wohl*" ("*Waldkühe*"). Frida Leider, soprano, Friedrich Schorr, baritone, and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra directed by Leo Blech. "*Mime, hiess ein mür-rischer Zwerg*," "*Schweig' eures*

Jämmers" ("*Götterdämmerung*"). Lauritz Melchior, Otto Helgers, Elfriede Marherr-Wagner, and Frida Leider, with Robert Heger and Leo Blech, conductors. Angel COLH 105, \$5.98.

INSOFAR AS the performances of the great vocalists and the able conductors above enumerated are concerned, I will go along with almost any words of praise, especially for Melchior's magical projection of the dying Siegfried's love for Brünnhilde (always one of his finest moments), Schorr's rolling sonority in Wotan's farewell, and Leider's pleading in "*War es so schmähhlich?*" But to include these examples in the series called "*Great Recordings of the Century*" implies some things about the totality which are demonstrably false. Namely, the kind of fidelity to Wagner's orchestral writing which is narrowly acceptable at best, and downright feeble at worst. It is one thing to extract all the sound in the metal plates (as has been well done in the Cortot-Thibaud-Casals "*Archduke*" noted on page 38): but it is obviously impossible to reproduce a larger orchestra than was being used in 1927-28 (all the tracks except the Melchior, which is dated 1930).

Nevertheless, for those who never heard Schorr or Melchior at their best, or whose acquaintance with Leider was a limited one, these are excellent instances of what made each a paragon for the roles with which they are identified. The Leider "*Immolation*" scene is of special interest today, now that those of Flagstad and Traubel, Lawrence and Moedl have intervened. She doesn't have the vocal opulence of either Flagstad or Traubel, or the youthful vitality of Lawrence, but she does have a depth of characterization, an inwardness in the words and music, which gives a special individuality to her Brünnhilde. The haste at some points is attributable less to Blech's inclinations than to the time limits of the original 78 rpm sides.

News from Nippon

COPLAND: *Dance Symphony*; STEVENS: *Symphony No. 1*. Akeo Watanabe conducting the Japan Philharmonic Symphony. CRI 129, \$5.95.

SO FAR AS either recollection or research (admittedly non-exhaustive) reveals, there has not been a previous recording of the so-called "*Dance*" symphony (a derivative of the "*Grohg*" ballet suite). The special irony of this is that it won a \$5,000 prize in 1929 offered by the (then) Victor Company, whose benefits were to include a re-

cording. Everybody knows what happened to the record industry after 1929: this project was a casualty.

Thus, almost x number of years later, the Dance Symphony has its first recording, and the credit it reflects upon the work is considerable. It is plain to see now that this expression or that effect reflects the younger Copland's love of Debussy or Stravinsky, but it is also audible that they are being digested into a creative body of his own, from which the later works of individuality emerged.

The Stevens symphony of 1945 is the work of a composer known primarily as author of "*The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*," a pioneer volume of great worth. A compact creation within a single continuous movement, Stevens's Symphony No. 1 has flow, contrast, individuality—the essentials of musical interest, whatever the mode of expression. It also acquaints us with a musical mentality whose further works should be equally well worth knowing.

The performances range from excellent to indifferent, depending in large measure upon the technical complications of the passages or sections being performed. In slower tempi, and at medium dynamic range, the players' identification with the unfamiliar idioms is surprisingly close and understanding. When the pace is faster, as in Copland's finale, the pitch tends to become vague and off-center. But it is obviously the product of hard and earnest work, for which Watanabe (of Japanese-Finnish origin, and for two years an advanced pupil of Jean Morel at Juilliard) may be properly proud. The technical work conforms well to the current international standard. —IRVING KOLODIN.



Halsey Stevens—"flow, contrast, individuality."

RECORDINGS REPORTS I: ORCHESTRAL LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Beethoven: Symphony No. 4 in B flat. Ernest Ansermet conducting the Suisse Romande Orchestra. London CS 6070, \$4.98.	A fine sense of pulse and a keen response to the underlying rhythmic urge of this music dominate Ansermet's treatment. There is also ample opportunity for the superior wind instrument soloists of his orchestra to distinguish themselves. The "Coriolan," however, I find a little brittle, without sufficient weight.
Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C minor. Fritz Reiner conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LSC 2343, \$5.98.	As those who have heard his recent versions of the "Eroica" and the Seventh Symphonies are aware, Reiner has made his orchestra a powerful instrument for the articulation of his ideas on the classical repertory. This one is of the same quality in performance, but I prefer a more deliberate treatment of No. 5, especially in the first movement and scherzo, both of which develop something of a breathless haste. Excellent sound throughout, including a "Coriolan" of impact and character. (Monaural: LM 2343 \$4.98.)
Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 in F ("Pastorale"). Antal Dorati conducting the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Epic BC 1038, \$5.98.	Dorati does not get quite as much response from the Vienna Symphony as he does from his own Minneapolis players: at its best, it remains a worthy rather than great ensemble. For that matter, the words are equally applicable to the interpretation of the "Pastorale," which provides a pleasant rather than memorable day in the country. (Monaural LC 3611, \$4.98.)
Beethoven: Symphony No. 7 in A. Georg Solti conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. London CS 6093, \$4.98.	All the evidence of the past year (as in his "Rheingold") indicates that Solti is making longer strides toward eminence in his field than any of his contemporaries. Fortright and musicianly, this interpretation also has a substantial part of the strength and purpose wanted to realize the composer's objectives. Still lacking is sufficient discrimination in dynamic contrasts to illuminate some of the effects Solti clearly has in mind. Few recordings have compared in string sound to this one.
Chopin: Concerto No. 2 in F minor. Alexander Uninsky, piano, with the Hague Philharmonic conducted by Willem van Otterloo. Epic BG 1037, \$5.98.	Uninsky has every attribute for outstanding performance of Chopin save one—the total glow which helps to differentiate subtlety from superficiality. Strength and fluency are present in abundance, but they could be administered somewhat more flexibly. Van Otterloo and the orchestra are with him all the way. The choice of the Polonaise-Fantaisie in A flat (Op. 61) to fill out the second side is an attractive one. (Monaural: LC 3610, \$4.98)
Dvorák: Symphony No. 2 in D minor. Rafael Kubelik conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. London CS 6083, \$4.98.	As poor-sounding, inferior recording of this order could hardly be repeated in the same work by the same conductor and orchestra, it must be concluded that this stereo is a product of the same session which was represented in the monophonic catalogue (LL 1606) for five years or so past. As such it adds nothing to Kubelik's stature, nor does it reflect credit on London's claims vis-a-vis two-track reproduction. The performance itself has much to commend it.
Grieg: "Holberg" suite; Mozart: "Petits Riens" suite. Karl Münchinger and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. London CS 6088, \$4.98.	Another remembrance of things from the past, this version of the Grieg is probably the best performance it has ever had on discs. The string sound is appreciably enhanced by the stereo treatment, especially in the clarification of inner strands of sound. The Mozart side is several degrees less successful, Münchinger lacking the kind of refinement that made the Arthur Goldschmidt treatment (with members of the Paris Conservatory Orchestra on "Anthologie Sonore") such a pleasure. (Monaural: LL 1685, \$3.98.)
Mozart: Concertos No. 17 in G (K. 453) and No. 24 in C minor (K. 491). Gina Bachauer, piano, with Alec Sherman conducting the London Orchestra. Capitol SG 7194, \$5.98.	Though Miss Bachauer is customarily associated with more muscular matters than Mozart, she adjusts her pianistic output to the requirements of these two works with a good deal of success, especially as the orchestral backgrounds directed by Sherman (her husband) are scaled appropriately. Withal, the aural appeal is limited mostly to what Miss Bachauer does with her fine finger control, rather than with a profounder impulse from the mind. The "London" orchestra—not to be confused with any record company of that name—is of a size associated with the name of Harry Blech, and may include some of the same players. Beautifully balanced stereo sound. (Monaural: G 7194, \$4.98.)
Ravel: "Daphnis et Chloe." Pierre Monteux conducting the London Symphony, with the chorus of the Royal Opera House. London CS 6147, \$4.98.	Inasmuch as Monteux performs the score in toto, and also includes the desirable choral parts, this should take care of all reasonable requirements for "Daphnis et Chloe" for some time to come. The balance and "reasonableness" of his procedures do not exclude real inner warmth, a plastic sense of the music's ebb, flow, and crest. The sound is all it should be.
Respighi: "Pines of Rome"; Gabrieli: Sonata "Pian e forte"; Frescobaldi: "Gagliarda"; Palestrina: "Adoramus Te." Leopold Stokowski conducting the Symphony of the Air. United Artists UAL 7001, \$4.98.	All of this is music of which Stokowski has a vivid interpretative conception, and under his painstaking guidance the players of the Symphony of the Air give him the execution of a great orchestra. The orchestral mastery and executive skill are readily apparent in the broad strokes with which the "Pines" are recreated, but there is equal distinction in the intimacy of mood and fervor of feeling conveyed in his Frescobaldi and Palestrina arrangements. Also included is a transcription for strings and harp of Cesti's "Tu mancavi a tormentarmi, crudelissima speranza." Robert E. Blake is responsible for the outstanding quality of the reproduced sound. (Stereo: UAS 8001, \$5.98.)
Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C. Rafael Kubelik conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Capitol SG 7195, \$5.98.	A dozen recorded versions of this great work, plus a miscellany more in the concert hall, would seem to have provided virtually every conceivable approach to it. However, Kubelik manages a quality never heard from another conductor—a casual, "no comment" recreation which concentrates on a note-perfect performance by the orchestra. This may be Kubelik's considered alternative to the overemphasis in which some others indulge, but it is an evasion of the central responsibility of any interpreter: a positive statement about the music he has chosen to perform. Not distinguished as a recording, either. (Monaural: G 7195, \$4.98.)
Turina: "La Procesión del Rocio," "La Oración del Torero"; Albéniz: "Navarra"; Guridi: "Ten Basque Dances." Ataulfo Argenta conducting the Orquesta Nacional de Espana. London CS 6130, \$4.98.	For those who missed them in their first time around in monophonic reproduction, attention may be directed to Jesus Guridi's arrangement of material from his native Basque country. The calculated simplicities of the transcriptions are respected in the late Argenta's understanding recreation. He is also a keenly sympathetic interpreter of Turina, though the disc as a whole does not approach the total quality of work in the "Music of Spain" series (due, perhaps, to different engineers?). (Monaural: LL 1585, \$3.98.)
Von Suppé: "Light Cavalry," "Poet and Peasant," "Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna," "Pique Dame." Georg Solti conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. London CS 6146, \$4.98.	Even before he was known as a conductor of much else, Solti had commended himself with the zest, flavor, and musicality of this same repertory with the Vienna Philharmonic (LL 352). Add to it the increased authority he has acquired in the intervening years, plus the close knit of his cooperation with the orchestra, and you have a glorification of this repertory which takes it out of the cinema palace and puts it back in its rightful place among the best of operetta music. Fine reproduction also.

—IRVING KOLODIN.